



# **Texas Border Security:** A Strategic Military Assessment

September 2011



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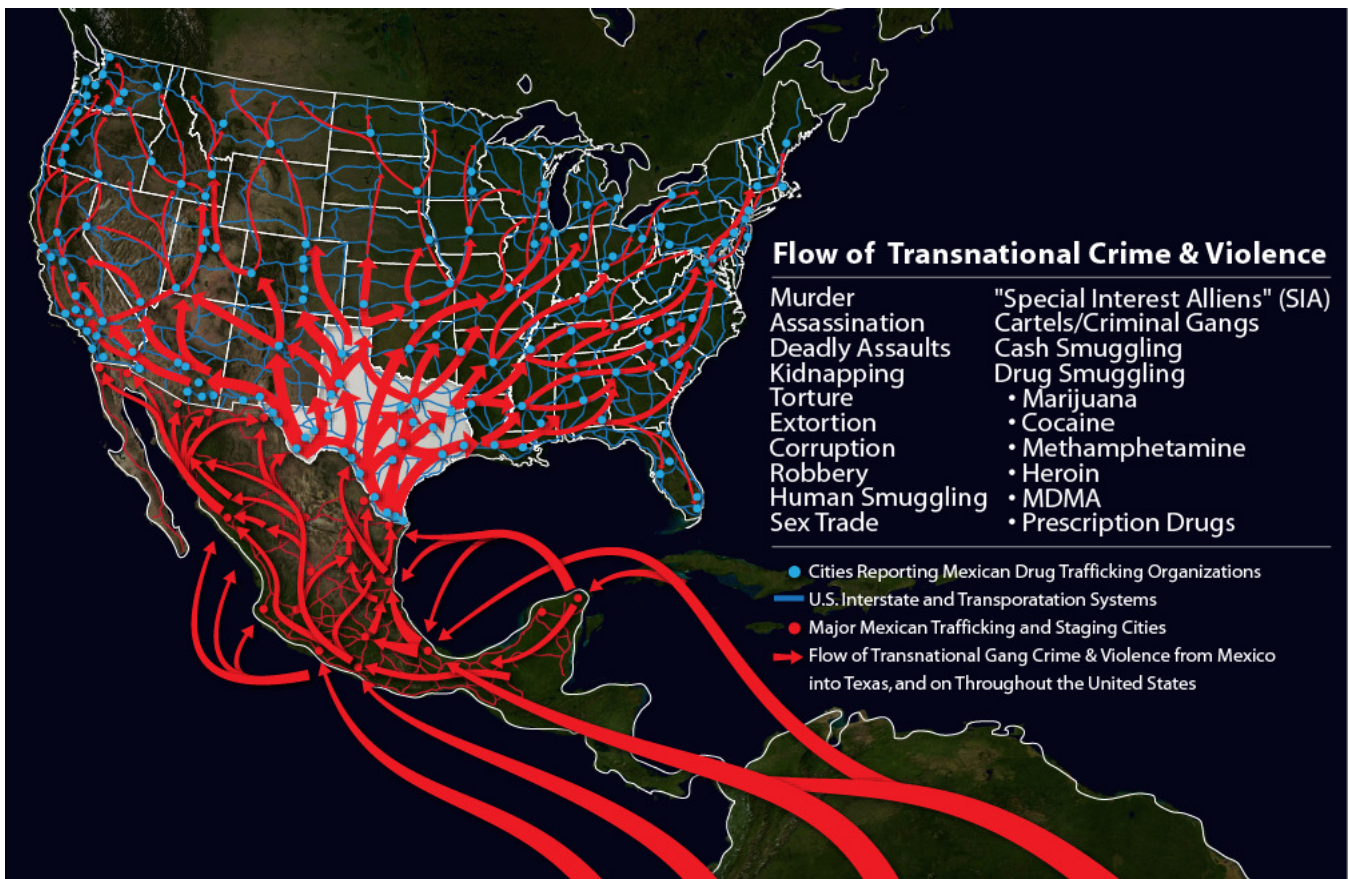
**America's Premier Landpower Advocate**

**Barry R. McCaffrey  
Robert H. Scales PhD**

# TEXAS BORDER SECURITY:

## *A STRATEGIC MILITARY ASSESSMENT*

Barry R. McCaffrey  
Robert H. Scales, PhD



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Barry R. McCaffrey and Robert H. Scales, PhD

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# **TEXAS BORDER SECURITY: A STRATEGIC MILITARY ASSESSMENT**

## **Executive Summary**

During the past two years the state of Texas has become increasingly threatened by the spread of Mexican cartel organized crime. The threat reflects a change in the strategic intent of the cartels to move their operations into the United States. In effect, the cartels seek to create a “sanitary zone” inside the Texas border -- one county deep -- that will provide sanctuary from Mexican law enforcement and, at the same time, enable the cartels to transform Texas’ border counties into narcotics transshipment points for continued transport and distribution into the continental United States. To achieve their objectives the cartels are relying increasingly on organized gangs to provide expendable and unaccountable manpower to do their dirty work. These gangs are recruited on the streets of Texas cities and inside Texas prisons by top-tier gangs who work in conjunction with the cartels.

## **Strategic, Operational and Tactical Levels of Conflict**

The authors of this report, both retired senior military executives bring more than 80 years of military and governmental service to their perspective on Texas border security viewed in terms of the classic levels of conflict: *strategic, operational and tactical*.

### **Strategic**

America’s fight against narco-terrorism, when viewed at the strategic level, takes on the classic trappings of a real war. Crime, gangs and terrorism have converged in such a way that they form a collective threat to the national security of the United States. America is being assaulted not just from across our southern border but from across the hemisphere and beyond. All of Central and South America have become an interconnected source of violence and terrorism. Drug cartels exploit porous borders using all the traditional elements of military force, including command and control, logistics, intelligence, information operations and the application of increasingly deadly firepower. The intention is to increasingly bring governments at all levels throughout the Americas under the influence of international cartels.



## **Operational**

In the United States the operational level of the campaign against cartel terrorism is manifested at the state. Texas has become critical terrain and operational ground zero in the cartel's effort to expand into the United States. Texas has an expansive border with drug cartels controlling multiple shipping lanes into the state. Texas' location as the geographic center of the U.S. allows for easier distribution of drugs and people. In effect, the fight for control of the border counties along the Rio Grande has become the operational center of gravity for the cartels and federal, state and local forces that oppose them.

## **Tactical**

At the tactical level of war the cartels seek to gain advantage by exploiting the creases between U.S. federal and state border agencies, and the separation that exists between Mexican and American crime-fighting agencies. Border law enforcement and political officials are the tactical focal point. Sadly, the tactical level is poorly resourced and the most vulnerable to corruption by cartels. To win the tactical fight the counties must have augmentation, oversight and close support from operational and strategic forces.

History has shown that a common border offers an enemy sanctuary zone and the opportunity to expand his battlespace in depth and complexity. Our border with Mexico is no exception. Criminality spawned in Mexico is spilling over into the United States. Texas is the tactical close combat zone and frontline in this conflict. Texans have been assaulted by cross-border gangs and narco-terrorist activities. In response, Texas has been the most aggressive and creative in confronting the threat of what has come to be a narco-terrorist military-style campaign being waged against them.

## **Texas as a Narco-Sanctuary**

A successful sanctuary permits insurgents to move freely and operate on whichever side offers greater security. In a curious twist of irony, the more successful the Mexican military becomes in confronting the cartels, the greater likelihood that cartels will take the active fight into Texas as they compete against each other in the battle to control distribution territories and corridors

Federal authorities are reluctant to admit to the increasing cross-border campaign by narco-terrorists. Until lately, denial has been facilitated by a dearth of evidence that an organized and substantial campaign exists inside Texas. Evidence collected for this report, principally

from Texas border counties, reveals a palpable sense of frustration concerning the effectiveness of U.S. federal border operations.

Accounts of this violence, both data driven and anecdotal, compiled by federal agencies, Congressional testimony and the Texas Department of Agriculture underscores the daily activity and constant threat of a larger presence of narco-terrorists than previously thought. The Federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS) does not attribute many narco-crimes to the cartels. Many cross-border crimes are routinely not reported by border farmers and ranchers due to fear of retribution from cartels.

The cartel's foot soldiers who fight the tactical battle in Texas are "transnational gang" members many of whom are drawn from prison gangs such as the Mexican Mafia, Texas Syndicate, Tango Blast, Barrio Azteca and others that formed in U.S. prisons for self-preservation and protection from other gangs. These transnational gangs not only have continued to expand in Texas and the nation but constitute a very tightly knit network of cooperation and connectivity that has been growing between prison gangs and Mexican cartels.

### **Impact on Texans**

Fear and anxiety levels among Texas farmers and ranchers have grown enormously during the past two years. Farmers, ranchers and other citizens in border communities are caught in the crossfire of escalating cross-border violence resulting in large part from conflicts between cartels, paramilitary enforcement groups and transnational gangs struggling for control of key drug and illegal alien smuggling routes into the U.S. from El Paso to Brownsville. Some Texas farmers and ranchers have even abandoned their livelihoods to move their families to safer ground.

Living and conducting business in a Texas border county is tantamount to living in a war zone in which civil authorities, law enforcement agencies as well as citizens are under attack around the clock. The Rio Grande River offers little solace to the echoes of gunshots and explosions. News of shootings, murders, kidnappings, beheadings, mass graves and other acts of violence coming across the border go far beyond any definition of "spillover violence."

## **Texas Joins the War**

Because Texas is the frontline in this conflict and because its citizens and institutions are most affected, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) has developed a comprehensive military-like operational campaign against narco-terrorists. This effort is still growing and changing in response to an adaptive and ruthless enemy that still harbors an intense desire to take its campaign into the United States. Five years of effort to curtail narco-terrorist intrusion has given the Texas DPS and its state and local partners enormous and hard-won experience in the art and science of fighting the southwest border war.

Beginning in 2006, Texas began a series of high-intensity, sequential, short-duration operations that resulted in crime reductions ranging from 25 percent to as high as 75 percent as smuggling operations decreased. Later, the state expanded and lengthened these operations by increasing the patrol presence along the Texas-Mexico border. Governor Perry was able to achieve this expansion of effort by leveraging various discretionary grants to increase local and state patrol capacity along the border through overtime payments and the purchase of communications and surveillance equipment as well as new vehicles and weapons. The governor also committed Texas military forces to support these operations.

To gain support from the citizenry, in 2007 the Texas Legislature created the Border Security Council (BSC) charged with advising the governor regarding the allocation of discretionary state homeland security funds. The BSC held a series of public hearings and received testimony from business owners, law enforcement officers, local elected officials and private citizens and then produced a comprehensive report and recommendations on border security issues for the governor and Texas Legislature.

## **Organization for Combat**

### **BSOC-UCs/JOICs**

The state of Texas organized for combat in a manner familiar to the military by creating six Unified Commands (UCs) each staffed with a Joint Operations and Intelligence Center (JOICs) located principally within Texas cities most threatened by cartel violence. This Texas effort, led by the Texas Rangers, is dependent on a cooperative relationship based not on command authority, but on a shared relationship, trust and commitment to work together.

This cooperative group of players is represented by federal, state, local and military components. The heart and operational engine of the Texas border security effort is located

in Austin within the Border Security Operations Center (BSOC). All unified command and joint players intersect in a single facility administered by the Texas Ranger Division of the DPS. The BSOC collects and shares information from all state, local and federal agencies.

Six years of experience has produced a collaborative interagency network that has grown by establishing trust and confidence among network participants from strategic through tactical. The comity engendered through successful operation allows the BSOC team to chip away at bureaucratic cultures and mindsets. Such experience serves to generate interpersonal incentives and rewards selflessness and a commitment to collaborative behavior.

Years of experimentation and field operations have yielded a wealth of lessons learned as well as new materiel, tactics and doctrine unique to Texas but capable of being shared by other state and federal border security agencies. The BSOC operates using a statewide mapping system that graphically displays and shares with unified commands and federal agencies a crime map that includes all drug, cash and weapons seizures. It fuses information from other state and federal agencies. Texas has developed cheap and effective locally procured wildlife cameras linked to the Internet that are capable of passing images in real time to state authorities.

### **Texas Rangers Lead the Fight**

The first principle of Texas border security operations is to empower local law enforcement. Soldiers often say that bad strategies cannot be salvaged by good tactics--- but bad tactics can defeat a good strategy. This saying simply reinforces the truism that no national strategy that seeks to defeat narco-terrorism can be adequately confronted unless tactical units, such as local police and federal border security stations, are properly staffed, resourced, competent and well-led.

The Texas Rangers lead a cooperative program that brings together a ground, air and marine assault capability. Ranger Reconnaissance Teams are the tactical combat elements in the war against narco-terrorists. Each participating federal, state and local agency voluntarily adds its unique capabilities to the teams. The Texas Highway Patrol acts as an outer perimeter for the Rangers by funneling traffic toward Ranger border positions. Tactical contact teams, deploying along the Rio Grande in small, concealed positions, are able to respond immediately to intelligence from Autonomous Surveillance Platform (ASP) units, DPS and National Guard surveillance helicopters, as well as calls to UCs from local

police or citizens. DPS Dive Teams conduct SONAR scans of the Rio Grande and assist in recovery of vehicles and contraband in splashdown areas.

Resources remain the greatest impediment to the expansion and continued success of the Rangers' border war against the cartels. Budget cuts for DHS, its Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the United States Coast Guard USCG) have severely constrained the ability of Texas to rely on its federal partners and their resources to expand border operations.

### **A Successful System Under Threat**

Years of collective effort by Texas law enforcement have yielded a remarkably flexible and efficient system of border protection that involves all levels of command from federal to local. This system is under threat not only by an increasingly ruthless and adaptive enemy but also by an increasingly diminished budget.

Without question, the future success of this effort will depend on the ability of the state of Texas, local and federal agencies to work together to expand their war against intrusion by cartels. The bottom line, however, is that while today Texas is the frontline in this escalating war, the potential consequences of success or failure will affect our entire nation. Thus, it is up to the nation to support Texas in its efforts to defeat this transnational criminal enterprise.

## **Texas Border Security: A Strategic Military Assessment**

### **Recommendations**

**Communications and the Network:** A truly seamless joint effort between federal, state and local law enforcement cannot occur unless all of the players are connected by an integrated broadband system. Such a system must network all land, air and maritime communications systems. It also must be robust enough to connect the smallest border town police departments (with adequate cyber-security controls) to the most sophisticated national domestic intelligence networks. Only a consortium of federal and state and local resources can make such an expansive effort affordable and successful.

**Operations:** The success of border operations by the Texas Rangers should serve as a template for the future. Federal border security agencies should continue to support and enhance the current joint operational framework established by the state of Texas and

tactically implemented by the Texas Rangers. Reform at that operational level is dependent on bringing more “boots on the ground” to the fight for border security to include a greater participation by the National Guard under state control. All agencies involved should develop a framework and establish an alliance for integrated cross border planning, intelligence sharing, communications and synchronized operations. Such an effort must include all legal, procedural and policy changes necessary to break down bureaucratic, cultural and mind-set barriers that currently exist between front line local, state and federal participants.

**Intelligence:** Reform of the border security intelligence system must begin with more sophisticated cross-border technical and human intelligence collection about the enemy coupled with the ability to offer a clearer digital picture of the battlefield to border tactical forces. Key to this effort must be a quantum improvement in the ability of the federal intelligence agencies to gather, analyze and disseminate actionable intelligence and information in real time with state and local law enforcement. Federal support is also needed to accelerate enhancement of the Department of Public Safety’s TxMAP system for Intelligence mapping and data base support.

**Technology:** The state of Texas should develop a plan for Federal funding and participation in a “Joint Technology Development Center.” The creation of a joint Federal and state “skunk works” effort would combine federal financial and scientific research assets with the proven success of Texas’ efforts to apply off the shelf technologies to winning the battle for border security. Such an effort would focus on technologies to detect, track, assess, classify, interdict and prosecute criminals along the Southwest border region. Technological areas with the most promise include meshing networks, low cost un-manned ground sensors, ground surveillance radars, remote cameras, aerial platforms, thermal and night vision capabilities, command and control facilities, state of the art weapons and sighting systems as well as identification systems connected to dynamic and inclusive data bases.

**Learning:** No amount of well-intended effort will completely eliminate the natural operational friction that exists between disparate federal, state and local agencies confronting these lethal and well-resourced Mexican criminal cartels. Decades of experience in fighting our nation’s foreign wars have shown time and again that reducing operational friction can best be achieved by a system that enhances shared awareness and mutual understanding. To this end, Texas should establish an effort that teaches all participants “how Texas border operations work.” The Texas effort would be based on proven joint military programs. The Texas and federal partners must bring together all

participants into a single in-resident and virtual classroom to learn the detailed procedures, statutes, organizations, doctrine, tactical methods and rules of engagement. Faculty and funding would be shared by experienced operators from all levels of law enforcement, federal to local.

# **Texas Border Security: A Strategic Military Assessment**

Barry R. McCaffrey  
Robert H. Scales, PhD

*"We are in a war. We are in a war and I'm not going to sugar coat it by any means. We are in a war and it is what it is." -- Arthur Barrera, Texas Ranger*

## **I. PURPOSE**

### **A: The Task**

In June 2011, Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples requested that two senior military officers, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (Ret.) and Gen. Robert Scales (Ret.), develop and recommend a military-style strategy and operational and tactical requirements to secure the Texas portion of the U.S.-Mexico border. He also requested specific information related to the financial, manpower, technology and other resources needed to secure the Texas-Mexico border; and ways in which the roles and resources of U.S. federal agencies could be optimally deployed to facilitate implementation of these recommendations.

### **B: The Approach**

This paper will delineate the terrorist template in order to highlight the magnitude and dynamics of the growth of lawlessness in Mexico and the threats the drug cartels pose to the people of Texas; and to focus attention on the success of a Texas-led effort to take back our nation's southwest border. The paper will then describe efforts made by U.S Federal and Texas law enforcement agencies to confront this growing threat. The intent is to use Texas as a model for a nationwide campaign that will stem the cross-border intrusion of these dangerous and insidious criminal groups.

It will give cost-effective, evidence-based solutions for the future with the aspiration that defending our Southwest border will become a priority for the nation.



## **C: The Bottom Line: Mexican Cartels Seek to Create a “Sanitary Zone” Inside the United States**

This paper will be the first to conclude that the cartels are following a twofold strategic plan:

1. First, to create a “sanitary zone” inside the Texas border -- one county deep -- that will provide sanctuary from Mexican law enforcement and, at the same time, enable the cartels to transform Texas’ border counties into narcotics transshipment points for continued transport and distribution into the continental United States.
2. Second, to increasingly rely on organized gangs to provide expendable and unaccountable manpower to do their dirty work inside Texas and elsewhere in the country. These gangs are recruited on the streets of Texas cities and inside Texas prisons by top-tier gangs who work in conjunction with the cartels.

## **II: A Military Perspective**

Senior military leaders customarily analyze conflicts such as these from the three levels of war: strategic, operational and tactical. This construct applies to all forms of human conflict, including narco-terrorism. The authors will therefore exploit the classic three levels of war as a template for viewing the Texas border security challenge.

### **A: Strategic**

From the view of international crime and conflict, America’s fight against narco-terrorism, when viewed at the strategic level, takes on the classic trappings of a real war. Crime, gangs and terrorism have converged in such a way that they form a collective threat to the national security of the United States. As Robert Killebrew writes in his superb study “Crime Wars”:

*“Crime, terrorism, and insurgency are interwoven in new and dangerous ways that threaten not just the welfare but also the security of societies in the Western Hemisphere. Scale and capability have made the cartels an insurgent threat as well as a criminal one.”*

To make the case that narco-terrorism crosses the line from crime to war at the strategic level demands that the threat must extend beyond our border. Clearly, America is being assaulted not just from across our southern border but from across the hemisphere and

beyond. All of Central and South America have become an interconnected source of crime, violence and terrorism. Drug cartels exploit porous borders using all the traditional elements of military force, including command and control, logistics, intelligence, information operations and the application of increasingly deadly firepower. The intent is to increasingly bring governments at all levels throughout the Americas under the influence of international cartels.

Today's crime wars and narco-terrorism affect the national security situation and policies of nation states from Bolivia to Columbia, Guatemala, Mexico and the United States. Local law enforcement simply are not equipped to prosecute these wars. We must now begin to collect the level of force protection traditionally used in classic warfare if we are to match and eventually defeat increasingly effective strategic forces of cartels, gangs and the corrupt national level forces that protect them.

### **B: Operational**

In the United States the operational level of the campaign against cartel terrorism is manifested at the state level. Operational campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or areas of operations. The four border states (California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas) are the operational center of gravity and the point of conflict through which the U.S. federal agencies implement national anti-drug strategy as outlined by the commander-in-chief.

State territory gives cartels the operational depth they need to translate cross-border tactical success into their strategic objective of profiting from the distribution of narcotics throughout our country. Exploiting the internal workings of state affairs and occupying state terrain gives the cartels depth to maneuver and the ability to extend their battlespace into secure regions beyond the reach of an expanding Mexican domestic anti-cartel campaign. Among the four border states, Texas has become critical terrain and operational ground zero in the cartel's effort to expand into the United States. Texas has an expansive border with drug cartels controlling multiple shipping lanes into the state. Texas' location as the geographic center of the U.S. allows for easier distribution of drugs and people.

### **C: Tactical**

As we have seen in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, wars are won or lost at the tactical level. The narco-terrorist war is no different. The tactical level of war is where enemies collide in the close fight. At the tactical level the cartels seek to gain advantage by exploiting the creases between U.S. federal and state border agencies, and the separation that exists

between Mexican and American crime-fighting agencies. Border law enforcement and political officials are the tactical focus point. Sadly, the tactical level is poorly resourced and is the most vulnerable to corruption by cartels. To win the tactical fight the counties must have augmentation, oversight and close support from operational and strategic forces.

### **III. BACKGROUND**

#### **A: Mexico: Our Vulnerable Center of Gravity**

America's hunger for illicit drugs and the Mexican criminal structure to supply them have created an internal war in Mexico that has stripped that country of its internal security to the extent that a virtual state of siege now exists adjacent to our own southwestern states. The Mexican people are sad inheritors of tragic conditions spawned by this incipient war, including over 40,000 murdered, many thousands kidnapped, commerce diminished, and civil society in Mexico's northern states severely deteriorated. The terror inflicted on the Mexican people can no longer be characterized as mere wanton criminality. Conditions in Mexico have become so horrific as to approach a civil war, driven by terrorists motivated by profit and greed rather than ideology or radical religion. Conditions in Mexico are akin to the beginnings of a terrorist failed state, and the impact of these conditions on the state of Texas and its citizens is both dramatic and far-reaching.

Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steven McCraw has testified to the fact that over the last 18 months, six of seven cartels have established command and control facilities in Texas cities that rival even the most sophisticated battalion or brigade level combat headquarters. Texas has suffered 22 murders, 24 assaults, 15 shootings and five kidnappings related to the cartels. A troubling and insidious threat is the use of criminal gangs by the cartels, particularly along southwestern border counties that have less than 10 percent of the population, but account for almost 20 percent of juvenile gang-related crimes. Within the last year, the number of Texas prison gangs that work directly with the Mexican cartels has increased from four to 12.

The long-term effect on the public safety of Texans is profound in that almost two-thirds of criminal activity in Texas is gang-related. The cartels are beginning to make a significant investment in future gang activity by recruiting school-age children to support cartel enterprises.

1. **From Local to Transnational Gangs:** The cartel's intrusion inside the United States is tied to dozens of transnational gangs trained by the cartels and operating as agents in the metropolitan areas, cities, suburbs and towns of Texas. Collectively they

constitute a vast network of satellite criminal business enterprises that act as the marketing, enforcement, contraband distribution and money-laundering network for the cartels. Cartel-gang alliances have been developed within Texas prisons and these associations are growing. Likewise, regional alliances exist between specific gangs and specific cartels. Because minors are exempt from the full force of prosecution, cartels and gangs use juveniles for smuggling, cross-border scouting, in-school recruiting, drug sales and, sadly, even assassinations. The two biggest gang organizations in Texas, the Mexican Mafia and the Texas Syndicate, work as “subcontractors” for Mexican cartels both to enforce narco-trafficking and to transport drugs on U.S. soil.

2. **Increasing Cooperation Among Gangs:** Many “transnational gang” members come to the United States from Central American gangs formed in part by refugees who fled the wars in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras in the 1980s and were deported back to their home countries. These gangs not only have continued to expand in Texas but constitute a very tightly knit network of cooperation and connectivity that has been growing between prison gangs and Mexican cartels. Consensus among police departments suggests that gangs are growing in strength as well as numbers in Texas cities and suburbs. The Houston area and its suburbs, for example, are home to far more gang members than anywhere else in Texas. There are at least 225 documented gangs in the Houston area and surrounding counties with more than 10,000 “documented” members. Gang members have been arrested for home invasions, robbery, kidnapping, murder, extortion, money laundering and drug trafficking. About half of gang members arrested involve drug charges, many at the wholesale level.
3. **Transnational Shipments of Arms as Well as Drugs:** Between \$19 billion and \$39 billion in illicit proceeds move through southwestern border “bulk smuggling” operations to Mexico each year. Illegal firearms accompany bulk cash shipments across the nation, through Texas to the southwestern border. Between FY2005 and FY2010, ATF investigations led to the seizure of over 8,700 guns and the indictment of 1,705 defendants, of whom 1,170 were convicted.

## **B: Central and South America’s Drug Trafficking Crisis**

Today’s crime wars and narco-terrorism affect the national security situation and policies of nation states from Bolivia to Columbia, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico and the United States. Thanks to the American

and European thirst for narcotics, virtually all Central and South America states are experiencing an increase in transnational cartel activity.

Narcotics-related homicide rates have gone up in every country in the region, in some cases dramatically. The northern half of the Isthmus, comprising Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, is now the most violent region in the world. Formerly “safe” countries such as Costa Rica and Panama have seen their crime rates related to narcotics increase sharply in the past five years. Border security pressures along the Texas border cast a long shadow much farther south. Murders proliferating in Guatemala, for example, are directly related to drug trafficking. Today, more than one-third of Guatemala is under effective control of criminal narcotics organizations.

Mexico might have shared the fate of other states collapsed through terrorism had it not been for the resolve of President Calderón and his military, and for support given to the Mexican government. U.S. federal agencies have made progress in confronting the narco-terrorist threat through the Mérida Initiative. The rise of extreme violence on our southern border has convinced both the Bush and Obama administrations to increase the U.S. federal presence along the border. The number of DEA and Border Patrol manpower has grown since the start of the narco-wars. Likewise, the military has found a useful role in backstopping civilian border forces and on occasion adding military unique tactical technologies to the border war.

1. **Mérida Initiative and Other Assistance Programs:** In recent years, U.S.-Mexican relations have grown stronger as the two countries have worked together to combat drug trafficking and secure their shared border; however, tensions have intermittently emerged in this bilateral relationship. The cornerstone of this partnership is the Mérida Initiative, which this year includes over \$200 million in assistance.
  - a. Throughout 2009 and 2010, President Calderón and U.S. political leaders have begun to implement a new strategy for the Mérida Initiative focused on combating organized criminal groups trafficking drugs into the United States and illicit weapons and cash into Mexico.
  - b. The Mérida Initiative expanded bilateral and regional cooperation to combat organized crime and criminal gangs and to maximize the effectiveness of efforts against drug, human and weapons trafficking, including judicial reform, institution building, anti-corruption and rule of law activities. To date, the U.S. Congress has appropriated a total of \$1.5 billion for Mexico under the Mérida Initiative. The Mérida Initiative also includes about \$300

million in equipment, including three UH-60 and eight Bell 412 helicopters. More than 6,800 federal police investigators, 1,800 penitentiary staff and 4,300 judicial sector personnel have participated in U.S.-funded training events.

- c. Overseen by the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), Department of Defense (DOD) can provide counterdrug assistance under certain circumstances. DOD counternarcotics support to Mexico totaled roughly \$200 million in FY2009-FY2011. DOD will use about \$50 million in FY2011 to improve security along the Mexico-Guatemala-Belize border. DOD support to Mexico in FY2012 may exceed \$75 million.

In spite of these efforts, Mexico remains the principal source of our vulnerability to narco- terrorism at the strategic level of war; and Texas is the state most vulnerable to the spread of instability and violence in Mexico. The “ground truth” of the war against the cartels on the Mexican side is well known: tens of thousands of murders and kidnappings as the cartels fight for control of cross-border movement of drugs and people to the north, and weapons and cash to the south. Narco-terrorists have forced capitulation of certain border cities and towns in order to claim territory for unimpeded transshipment of drugs, which has eroded legitimate commerce as several towns have emptied.

A perspective on the threat to Mexico from a senior Mexican official, Alejandro Poiré, spokesman for Mexico’s National Security Strategy Council, reveals the extent of the Mexican view of the cartel threat. Poiré said that President Calderon is opposed to legalizing drugs as a solution to the violence in Mexico. Most importantly, because of the way in which drug cartels have diversified their criminal activities, he stated further that “the security issue in Mexico is way beyond drug trafficking.” In effect Poiré concluded that cartels are fighting on two fronts: for control of border smuggling corridors and for control of drug distribution networks in the United States.

#### **IV: BEYOND SPECULATION – CARTEL ACTIVITY IN TEXAS**

Such violence driven by internal terrorism cannot remain isolated within one nation for very long. History has shown that a common border offers an enemy sanctuary zone and the opportunity to expand his strategic battlespace in depth and complexity. Our border with Mexico is no exception. Criminality spawned in Mexico is spilling over into the United States. Rival gangs affiliated with the Mexican cartels control the drug trade in over 300 American cities and towns, according to the FBI. According to the Justice Department’s National Youth Gang Center, since 1980 the growth of gangs in the United States has been incredibly rapid, from an estimated 286 jurisdictions, which reported the presence of

approximately 2,000 gangs made up of nearly 100,000 members in 1980 to over 30,000 gangs with more than 1 million members in 2011.

About 25 percent of the federal prison population in 2010 was comprised of 55,000 foreign nationals. Their numbers are growing. State and local correctional systems that applied for payments under the federal State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) in 2009 reported 296,000 illegal aliens who were jailed at least four days for a felony or two misdemeanors. The average incarcerated alien had seven arrests and committed an average of 12 offenses. Twenty-five percent of the aliens had 16 or more offenses.

In 2009 the Federal government spent about \$1.3 billion for the incarceration of aliens in the federal Bureau of Prisons system. Another \$323 million went for payments to states and localities as partial reimbursement for their costs. States and localities are incurring significant additional costs to incarcerate illegal aliens, since the SCAAP payments cover only a small fraction of the total cost. Texas spends \$13.5 million each month just for holding illegal immigrants who are either serving their sentences or awaiting deportation. An estimated 9,000 illegal immigrants are in Texas Department of Criminal Justice custody.

#### **A: Focus on Texas**

As in any trans-border conflict, violence is most pronounced at the international point of intersection. Four American states are most affected by this spreading and insidious conflict. This study focuses on Texas because it is the frontline in this conflict and because its citizens and institutions are most affected. Texas shares the longest border with Mexico. Texans have been the first to be assaulted by cross-border gangs and narco-terrorist activities. And, perhaps most importantly, among all border states, Texas has been the most aggressive and creative in confronting the threat of what has come to be a narco-terrorist military-style campaign being waged against them.

#### **B: Beyond the U.S./Mexico Border**

The problem with success so far is the assumption that while the economic, financial and social consequences of narco-terrorism has spread to all of the United States, the “war” as an active enterprise ends at the border. This may have been true in the past, but it most certainly is not true today. The reasons are many:

1. The spillover effect of increased violence in Mexico increases the violence on the U.S. side. But over the past two years, the war has intensified on our side due to the intentional design by warring cartels. Virtually every successful insurgency profits

from sanctuary across an international border. The North Koreans had China; The North Vietnamese Army had the Ho Chi Minh Trail along the border with Laos; and the Taliban winters in comfort in the Pashtun regions of Pakistan.

2. A successful sanctuary permits insurgents to move freely and operate on whichever side offers greater security. The narco-terrorist follows the same pattern of behavior where the most lucrative and safer sanctuary lies north of the border. In a curious twist of irony, the more successful the Mexican military becomes in confronting the cartels, the more likely the cartels will take the active fight into the United States as they compete against each other in the battle to control distribution corridors inside Texas.
3. Federal authorities are reluctant to admit to the increasing cross-border campaign by narco-terrorists. Until lately, denial has been facilitated by a dearth of evidence that an organized and substantial campaign exists inside Texas. Evidence collected for this report, principally from Texas border counties, reveals a palpable sense of frustration concerning the effectiveness of U.S. federal border operations. Accounts of this violence, which have been documented by numerous federal agencies, Congressional testimony and the Texas Department of Agriculture underscore the daily activity and constant threat of a larger presence of narco-terrorists than previously thought. The FBI does not differentiate between everyday or “drug-related” homicides, robberies, aggravated assaults, sexual assaults and motor vehicle thefts. They admit that their data for kidnapping, extortion, money laundering, bribery, coercion of public servants, organized crime, arson, fraud, perjury, trespassing, property destruction, weapons offenses, terrorist threat and trafficking of persons are not included in the FBI Uniformed Crime Report as being “drug- or gang-related” crimes. Therefore the collected data is always missing a critical element that would provide fidelity to the actual impact of drug- or gang-related offenses. One reason for this disparity between reported and actual cartel activity in Texas is that the 17,000 local and state law enforcement agencies that provide data to the UCR are not required to categorize these crimes as “drug-related.”

### **C: Cartel Violations of Texas Sovereignty**

Farmers and ranchers whose families have spent generations on the Texas side of the border reflect on how the character and intent of border crossing immigrants have changed over the past three years. They now see most of the intruders on their land as men tattooed



with the marks of cartels, gangs and in some cases Hezbollah members. They are confronted often with border-crossers who demand to use their phones or trucks. Texas homes are now surrounded by strangers who harass the owners until they concede their land for use by the cartels. Farmers refuse to travel at night.

About 75 miles from the Mexican border, Brooks County is not a border county but it contains the Falfurrias Border Patrol checkpoint. Smugglers constantly try to get around that checkpoint and evade local law enforcement. Illegal immigrants from Mexico, Central and South America, Pakistan, India, Africa, China and elsewhere turn up day and night. Rival gangs fight for valuable Brooks County territory to smuggle and also to steal oil from the oil fields and tap pipelines. Decaying human remains litter the landscape. The cost of autopsies and burials of illegal immigrants and the medical treatment of smuggling survivors drain the County's meager budget.

Smugglers regularly cross ranches to move their loads around the checkpoint, cutting fences, breaking water lines and sometimes stealing vehicles. Encounters by ranchers with groups of menacing strangers are commonplace. The situation is so bad that owners of a ranch in Brooks County packed up and left their 38,000 acre ranch because the area has become, as they described it, a war zone. Their home had been broken into, their land littered with garbage and the distinct sounds of gunfire could be heard from their front porch day and night. The ranch runs alongside Farm Road 755 which law enforcement calls a "main smuggling corridor" for the cartels.

Cartels proudly boast they have established training camps inside Texas. They have taken control of urban gangs and now use them like retail franchises to distribute drugs, launder money and arrange for the southward export of deadly firearms. Ranchers may not say much to the media for fear of reprisal or retaliation by the cartels. But they do talk to each other, every day, about what they see, hear and experience. They also have expressed their thoughts and feelings to the Texas Department of Agriculture, which has publicly documented many of those stories at [www.ProtectYourTexasBorder.com](http://www.ProtectYourTexasBorder.com).

One rancher observed:

*"But the Border Patrol, I could tell you that their hands are tied about a lot of stuff. They have to call Washington; even if they are having a gunfight down at the river, they are on the phone. They have to call Washington. The border patrol have boats on the river. They patrol the river. They are not allowed to pick up anybody that's in the water unless they are dead. If there's drug guys loading drugs, all they have to do*

*is step out and wade out in the water and Border Patrol can't touch them. They are not allowed to go into the water... and they can't do anything about it."*

A consensus has emerged among both citizens and state border officials that they believe U.S. federal agencies too often define their way out of the problem. As a consequence, extortions, violence and cartel corruptions of local officials are not routinely reported. Another factor revealed in testimonials by citizens living and earning their livings on the border strongly suggests that intimidation by cartels also is taking its toll on the reporting of border incidents. As one farmer noted:

*"We see a lot of things, but we keep our mouths shut about it. We just don't want to be on anybody's hit list. I keep to myself. The people that are doing what they're doing they keep to themselves. If I see something, I ignore it. I look the other way, but there is a problem. It's really bad. Here on the river, you see a lot of stuff and you don't pay attention to it. You walk away. You try to stay in an area where they see you, so if somebody gets caught, they don't say, 'Well they called somebody.' You know, just try to blend in and not create any waves."*

#### **D: Beyond Crime: The Impact of Cartel Control of the SW Border Counties**

The drug cartels and their criminal elements realize the value in exploiting small communities along the border for storing and breaking down large narcotic loads for further distribution and transportation. The cartels realize that Texas is a big state with limited law enforcement resources to cover vast rural areas. They take advantage of gaps in manpower and response times to push narcotics northward along established smuggling routes such as U.S. 83, U.S. 281, U.S. 77 and the interstate highway system. Narco-terrorist organizations employ a well-organized cadre of "scouts" who use sophisticated communication and observations techniques, encrypted radios and advanced optics to conduct their clandestine surveillance centered principally in the most vulnerable southwestern border counties. These scouts have armed themselves with automatic weapons and have demonstrated an increasing level of willingness to use them against local law enforcement.

Recent intelligence has revealed that criminal organizations, probably working for Los Zetas and the Gulf Cartel, had a strong foothold in Hidalgo County. The Hidalgo County, Sullivan City Police Chief Hernan Guerra was convicted for conspiracy with intent to distribute narcotics and for helping traffickers cross the border. Guerra along with members of Mexican drug cartel cells operating in Houston, El Paso, Corpus Christi and McAllen were among 429 accused traffickers arrested as part of a nationwide sweep in 2010. The seriousness of cartel intrusion into the Southern District of Texas was highlighted by the indictment of 58 people and the seizure of 31,000 pounds of marijuana; 1,300 pounds of

cocaine and an assortment of real estate as well as bank accounts. Subsequent investigations reveal that at least 70 residential lots in Hidalgo County had been purchased with millions of dollars in drug proceeds. In the U.S. Courts, Western District of Texas, which includes San Antonio and El Paso, 69 people were arrested, many with ties to the Juarez cartel.

Border farmers and ranchers suffer economically from cartel violence on both sides of the border. Cartel intrusion into commerce has affected Texas businessmen and farmers:

*“Three men approached one of our excavator operators and asked him what he was doing. He said ‘Well, I’m doing my job,’ and they said, ‘Well, we need you to cease excavating, stop clearing the trees and please move off.’ They said ‘OK’, and they said, ‘We’ll be back in about four hours and you need to stop and be gone. And if you’re not gone, then we’ll deal with you then.’ It’s a big concern for me because I’ve got three employees who work down there (along the river) and I’m worried about the employees. I don’t want them to get hurt, injured or even killed.”*

As a result of escalating violence, border residents, sadly, are being forced to leave their farms, some of which have been in families for generations:

*“After so many years, it’s upsetting, but either you move on or you know it’s dangerous for your family so I didn’t want to put them through that, and we just we just moved on from farming. It’s not a good feeling, when you’ve been doing something all of your life and then you have to change from there to now I’m behind a desk, my hands are so slick that uh I’m not used to that. It’s something very different. I’m used to getting on the tractor, harvesting and you know getting all greased up. It’s just a different feelings most definitely. They are controlling the farmers in the area and it’s really getting very sad.”*

Perhaps the least reported aspect of cartel intrusion into the state is the psychological impact of increasingly open and brazen activities along the border. Two years ago cartel agents inside Texas conducted their criminal activities covertly seeking as much as possible not to bring attention and create an atmosphere harmful to their financial successes. Today cartels’ brazenness has opened a new chapter in their activities, suggesting that they no longer fear public exposé. Cartels emblazon their vehicles with marks like large “Z”s or the Ferrari emblem to symbolize their affiliation to their individual cartels. Cartel hit squads have been known to wear uniforms. City gangs no longer hide their franchise activities from police. Ranchers and farmers increasingly find cartel members on their doorstep. When

crossing borders, cartel agents used to avoid local, state and federal border authorities. Today these criminals are willing to confront and sometimes fight openly, ignoring public outrage inside the state. These disturbing events have not only damaged the prosperity of southwestern border counties and cities, they also have had a detrimental impact on the morale of citizens, some of whom have farmed and ranched on the border for generations. Their sentiments reflect that this is not the traditional way of life along the border. It is, in fact a new and heightened level of unease, tension and fear.

As one long term rancher notes:

*“When I get up in the morning and step out the door, I’m looking for rattlesnakes and illegals, and I’m packing my gun and my cell phone. When I go down to feed my horses, I have my dog, my pistol and the cell phone. You just have to stay aware. Several months ago, I walked in my tack room and my two big dogs went ballistic, and there were two illegal aliens there. I get more angry than scared because you cannot be scared. You’re just going to have to pull your socks up and just get after it and I’ve got border patrol on speed dial.”*

## **V: TEXAS – THE DECISION POINT**

The cartels’ encroachment will exploit the tactical-operational divide along the Texas border in order to extend their controlled territory by about 100 miles inside Texas. The emerging tactical fight to push the cartels back across the border will have enormous strategic consequences for both the United States and Mexico. In effect, Texas has become the cartel’s decisive point in their concept of future operations.

### **A: Decision Point**

At the operational level of war, a decision point is a place that allows a commander to gain a marked advantage over an enemy and greatly influence the outcome of the operation. The sanctuary offered by an insecure border offers the cartels potential territory for continued criminal prosperity in the face of a less secure Mexico. It also provides the cartels with a preferred point of decision. Texas law enforcement officials led by Department of Public Safety Director, Steven McCraw, have committed themselves in conjunction with local law enforcement partners to preventing the enemy from establishing a sanitary tactical zone inside Texas.

**B: Why Texas?** Texas is preferred by the cartels because the state offers the greatest operational reach inside the U.S. and the deepest penetration into the greater American

drug market. The ever-expanding tentacles of drug-related crime are becoming very worrisome in Texas. Two south Texas sheriffs and 70 Customs and Border Patrol officials have been convicted for cartel-related corruption. This is an injustice that dishonors the thousands of law enforcement officers who take pride in their oaths to protect and defend. The cartels have expanded their criminal presence in Texas through human trafficking, kidnapping and other human- related crimes.

1. **Kidnappings:** According to DPS Director McCraw, the FBI in San Antonio reported that there have been 266 kidnappings since 2004, 14 reported in 2004, and 58 in 2009. Kidnappings include Americans kidnapped in Mexico, victims abducted in Texas and taken to Mexico and victims kidnapped in Texas by subjects from Mexico.
2. **Narcotics Seizures:** The depth of penetration inside Texas by the cartels can be measured by the enormous increase in narcotics seizures along the major highways from the Rio Grande to all neighboring states: methamphetamines, 135%; heroin, 2,500%; marijuana, 124%; and cocaine, 24%. Cartel importation of the profits of crime passing south through Texas includes a 168% increase in bulk cash and a 154% increase in weapons seized or purchased in the United States.
3. **Human Smuggling:** The human smuggling of undocumented aliens from Mexico, Central and South America across the southwest Texas border captures much attention from the public and the media. Three-quarters of all aliens who come into the U.S. from terrorist countries, mostly the Middle East, are captured in Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border. These are called “undocumented referrals” from “special-interest countries” such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and India. Somali intruders pose a particularly troublesome challenge for Texas law enforcement because they often claim political asylum when apprehended and too often are released into the general population without proper vetting. Global intrusions are merely another source of revenue for the cartels that collect fees from smuggling organizations for their use of cartel-controlled human smuggling routes. But these very special human cargoes are a particularly worrisome and serious threat that may well translate into a tragic, large-scale attack against American territory in the future.

## **C: The Economic Impact of Cartel Penetration**

1. **Growing Threat to Agriculture:** It is very clear from Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) data that fear and anxiety levels among Texas farmers and ranchers have grown enormously during the past two years. Farmers, ranchers and other citizens in border communities are caught in the crossfire of escalating cross-border violence resulting in large part from conflicts between cartels, paramilitary enforcement groups and transnational gangs struggling for control of key drug and illegal alien smuggling routes into the U.S. from El Paso to Brownsville. Some Texas farmers and ranchers have even abandoned their livelihoods to move their families to safer ground.
2. **Increased Danger to Texans:** Conditions within these border communities along both sides of the Texas-Mexico border are tantamount to living in a war zone in which civil authorities, law enforcement agencies as well as citizens are under attack around the clock. The river offers little solace to the echoes of gunshots and explosions. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) Deputy Commissioner David Aguilar admitted that the cartels control “several areas along our border with Mexico,” In fact he noted that “the cartels are turning into more of a Mafia-like organization that are specializing not just in one crime, not in the singular fashion.”
3. **Increasing Demand for State Services by Refugees:** In addition to gun battles and other violence at ports of entry, southwestern border communities have been subject at times to the massive influx of evacuees and casualties from Mexico – a mix of innocent civilians as well as criminals – all of whom may be fleeing violence. Such massive spillover overloads the Texas system of local justice and transports innocent victims of border violence to under-funded medical facilities along the border.

American institutions are a long way from being threatened fundamentally by narco-terrorists operating from Mexican sanctuaries. But the experience of Texas in particular provides compelling evidence of the dangers the nation faces from this spreading contagion. Border security is not a border state problem, but a national one that requires national attention.

## **VI: TEXAS & FEDERAL AGENCIES:**

## **SOLVING BORDER SECURITY PROBLEMS TOGETHER**

### **A: A Common Approach**

From their study and past experience, Gen. McCaffrey and Gen. Scales concur that both state and federal agencies agree on a similar operational and tactical approach to cripple transnational crime organizations:

1. First and foremost, both entities agree the strategic challenge is bigger than Texas, or even the United States for that matter. A federal comprehensive strategy is needed to deny cartels the ability to operate not only within the border region, but throughout Mexico, Central and northern South America.
2. The operational center of gravity for this enterprise must be the enemy's leadership. Texas and federal agencies must make a sustained effort to identify, investigate, apprehend, prosecute and eliminate cartel leadership in the U.S. and south of the U.S.-Mexico border.
3. As with any offensive operation, the shortest path to the destruction of the enemy's leadership is to attack his command and control structures, communications, transportation and logistics operations from South to Central America, through Mexico and well into the continental United States.
4. The enemy's greatest strength is his wealth. Thus, a second essential line of operations is to diminish and undermine the cartel's financial and economic power by attacking all components of his financial and economic structure.
5. The top six cartels are a legitimate threat to national security and should be placed on the Foreign Terrorist Organizations List.

### **B: Obstacles to be Overcome**

This rock solid Federal-Texas border security relationship is impeded by two essential problems:

1. Federal agencies must do more to remove bureaucratic, organizational, cultural and mindset barriers that impede full cooperation and collaboration, from information collection and sharing to joint action.
2. A strategic vision is needed to solidify Mexico's and our Central American allies' fight with the drug cartels.

## **C: A Commitment to Cooperation**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Justice (DOJ) and all other U.S. federal agencies, together with DPS, other Texas state agencies and local law enforcement agencies (LEAs) are fully engaged in fighting threats from cartels along the southwest border and are collectively committed to:

1. Enhancing information sharing and coordination of intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination.
2. Expanding the scope, quality and timeliness of actionable information and intelligence shared among partners.
3. Employing enhanced technology and training to support interdiction efforts.
4. Improving technology to screen vehicles and cargo, the use of cameras for surveillance, license plate readers at POEs and elsewhere, and biometric identification systems.
5. Increasing cooperation with Mexican counterparts.
6. Working on law enforcement and prosecutorial cooperation on both sides of the border.
7. Stemming the southbound flow of cash out of the U.S. into Mexico and countering all forms of money laundering.
8. Interdicting illegal weapons shipments destined for Mexico.
9. Working to strengthen domestic coordination and cooperation on both money laundering and weapons investigations.

## **D: The Texas Campaign**

Texas DPS along with its state and law enforcement partners is committed to disrupting and dismantling drug, cash, arms and human smuggling organizations operating along the southwest border. Even with its current financial and resource limitations, the Texas border security campaign plan includes all of the essential ingredients for success on the border and within Texas. However, sufficient financial resources are lacking to implement a sustainable operation across all the key border security campaign targets discussed in this report.

Effective planning and implementation of an intelligence-driven border security campaign by Texas no doubt can have a significant impact on the operation of cartel and transnational criminal enterprises. But that is not sufficient. The U.S. and Texas must increase their day-to-day and longer-term cooperation with Mexican counterparts through increased information sharing. The U.S. federal government has to take the leadership role by:

1. Broadening the presence and function of U.S. law enforcement liaisons in Mexico;



2. Increasing judicial cooperation with Mexico.
3. Enhancing cooperation with the Mexican government's financial intelligence unit.
4. Expanding bi-lateral efforts to stem the flow of drugs, money and weapons across the shared border.

## **VII: THE TEXAS EXPERIMENT – HOW IT WORKS**

The Texas Department of Public Safety has developed a comprehensive military-like operational campaign against narco-terrorists. This effort is still growing and changing to respond to an adaptive and ruthless enemy that still harbors an intense desire to take its campaign into the United States. Five years of effort to curtail narco-terrorist intrusion has given the Texas DPS and state and local partners enormous and hard-won experience in the art and science of fighting the border war.

What Texas has accomplished provides insights into how the war against this insidious and dangerous enemy can be exploited at the national strategic level. This effort began in earnest with the Border Security Strategy and Operations Plan written at the direction of Governor Perry in 2006. The governor set forth a four-part plan to increase border security and reduce all crime in Texas border counties.

The initial border strategy framework included a substantial increase in local and state law enforcement patrols made possible by a creative program that brought together tactical (local), operational (state) and strategic (national) forces under a state-led coordinated arrangement. This ad hoc partnership allowed for centralized coordination of patrol operations without interfering with the sovereignty of federal and the autonomy of local border enforcement agencies. Centralized coordination and planning opened the door to the creation of an intelligence scheme to drive border operations. A single effort permitted all three levels to combine many disparate border surveillance ideas and technologies together into a single inclusive program.

Beginning in 2006, Texas began a series of high-intensity, sequential, short-duration operations that resulted in crime reductions ranging from 25 percent to as high as 75 percent as smuggling operations decreased. Later, the state expanded and lengthened these operations by increasing the patrol presence along the Texas-Mexico border. Governor Perry was able to achieve this expansion of effort by leveraging various discretionary grants to increase local and state patrol capacity along the border through overtime payments and the purchase of communications and surveillance equipment as

well as new vehicles and weapons. The governor also committed Texas military forces to support these operations.

#### **A: The Texas Border Security Campaign Plan (2009-2011)**

Experience gained during the first three years provided the expertise necessary to draft the first Border Security Campaign plan completed in November 2009. The plan was the first and most inclusive operational level plan to counter crime along the Texas-Mexico border, in transit corridors and urban areas. In 2009, the Texas State Legislature allocated \$110 million for border security plus \$24 million to combat transnational gang activity across the state. The infusion of these funds has allowed the plan to be largely implemented through DPS's Operation BORDER STAR and other initiatives. Between 2009 and 2011, the state expanded the geographical focus of Texas border security operations to include the support of interdiction operations along major transit corridors throughout Texas to counter increasing illicit gangs, firearms and motor vehicle theft in major metropolitan such as Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio and Amarillo.

#### **B: Border Security Council**

One very important lesson learned during the formative period of this effort was the need to inform citizens and expand oversight of the program statewide. To achieve this goal, in 2007 the Texas Legislature created the Border Security Council (BSC) charged with advising the governor regarding the allocation of discretionary state homeland security funds. The BSC held a series of five public hearings and received testimony from business owners, law enforcement officers, local elected officials and private citizens. The Council held public hearings in McAllen, Laredo, El Paso, San Antonio, Austin and Corpus Christi. The Council's findings were as consistent as they were insistent. The citizenry demanded funding for additional local law enforcement officers. They counseled that law enforcement efforts to secure the border should not negatively impact on regional and local economies that are forced to use local and state resources to defend a national border.

Other findings were significant in that they concluded the state plan would not succeed without substantially more federal support. The federal government has not sufficiently staffed and equipped the Office of Field Operations at the ports of entry to reduce smuggling, nor have they provided for the secure and efficient movement of people and commodities to and from Mexico. The Council suggested that resources be increased to better detect and deter northbound and southbound smuggling. Border security operations require an even higher effort of coordination, hard work and sacrifice by dedicated local

and state law enforcement officers, Customs and Border Protection and other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Coast Guard. Local, state, and federal law enforcement along the border need enhanced encrypted radio and other communications capability to support operations and better ensure officer safety.

The BSC findings formed the nexus of initiatives that define the Texas operational level effort against narco-terrorism. Generally, border security operations should be expanded to augment southbound inspections to curtail the smuggling of bulk cash, stolen vehicles and weapons to Mexico. The state should expand its use of technology in the border area to include video surveillance, electronic fingerprint booking stations, electronic license plate readers, information-sharing technology systems, night vision goggles and forward-looking infrared radars (FLIR). More state and local money is needed to expand border radio interoperability and fully implement the Texas data exchange in the border region. The council also recommended expanding manpower to include K-9 units at each port of entry in coordination with federal border operations.

### **C. Unified Commands (UCs) and Joint Operations and Intelligence Centers (JOICs)**

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the Texas border security effort is the organizational plan for tying together all participants into a common scheme. The overall plan is structured much like a military-style “joint” command and control pyramid with strategic, operational and tactical elements united within layered “headquarters,” and tied together with world-class communications and training.

The big difference between a military and the Texas solution is that no one in the latter is in command. Instead, the Texas effort led by the Texas Rangers is dependent on a cooperative relationship based not on command authority, but on a shared relationship, trust and commitment to work together. The key coordinating elements are the “unified commands” (UCs). These are headquarters-style organizations created for six border sectors (El Paso, Marfa, Del Rio, Laredo, Rio Grande Valley and Coastal Bend) consisting of multiple jurisdictions with coordinated and shared federal-state-local-tribal responsibilities and resources.

By design, UCs in each sector allow agencies with six regional “joint” legal, geographic and functional authorities to work together effectively and efficiently without diminishing the authority, responsibility or accountability of any agency. UCs typically include: federal agencies (U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, Federal Bureau of Investigation/FBI; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement/ICE; DOJ’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and

Explosives/ATF; Drug Enforcement Agency/DEA; U.S. Coast Guard). Regional agencies include High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas/HIDTA; the Joint Terrorism Task Force/JTTF; State agencies include state military forces; DPS; Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD); Tribal authorities; County Sheriffs' Offices and municipal police departments, and other law enforcement agencies. UC operations also coordinate and solicit support from and for non-law enforcement government agencies such as: U.S. Postal Service, Department of Transportation, National Parks Service, and private companies such as railroads, UPS and FedEx; and private agencies such as the Civil Air Patrol and the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association. The El Paso UC also includes several counties from the state of New Mexico.

UCs promote interagency communication and information sharing. They analyze situational developments and produce and distribute recommendations for decisions and actions. They coordinate follow-up actions that are directed through consensus of the UCs. In other words, UCs are decision-making organizations that develop and seek to implement consensual solutions to defeat narco-terrorism at the border.

Every UC has a senior Texas Ranger on board to ensure that unified commands are held together. State, local and federal participants have offered the Texas Rangers the distinct advantage of coordinating the border security effort through a set of facilities and communications shared by all. This cooperative arrangement is connected using a communications network very similar to a military joint unified command. Six state unified tactical commands termed "Joint Operations and Intelligence Centers" (JOICs), are located in El Paso, Big Bend, Del Rio, Laredo, McAllen and the Coastal Bend. These headquarters are in turn linked to Austin and Washington. The JOIC network facilitates coordination among law enforcement agencies by developing a shared understanding of the threat environment. They serve as all-source information components in each of the security sectors producing tactical and strategic intelligence that support border security operations and also statewide anti-smuggling decision-making and activities. It is important to emphasize the UC/JOIC "command and control" system places the greatest emphasis and support at the local/tactical level.

#### **D: The Border Security Operations Center (BSOC)**

The heart and operational engine of the Texas border security effort is located in Austin within the Border Security Operations Center. All unified command and joint players intersect in a single facility administered by the Texas Ranger Division of the DPS. The BSOC collects and shares information from all state, local and federal agencies. Six years of

experience has produced a collaborative interagency network that has grown by establishing trust and confidence among network participants from strategic through tactical. The comity engendered through successful operation allows the BSOC team to chip away at bureaucratic cultures and mindsets. Such experience serves to generate interpersonal incentives and rewards selflessness and a commitment to collaborative behavior.

From its inception, BSOC has been augmented by liaison personnel from the U.S. Border Patrol and Texas military forces. Also joining the effort are liaison officers from U.S. federal and state agencies to participate in planning, coordinating and resourcing the tactical unified commands. All partners in the war on narco-terrorism in Texas come together at BSOC to develop strategic and operational plans, superintend military-styled after action reviews following each joint operation on the Rio Grande. Collectively, state, local and federal participants work to identify resource shortfalls.

In a manner very similar to a military division level headquarters, BSOC staff assimilates and analyzes information from each local unified command and sector with the intention of developing a dynamic Common Operational Picture for prioritization of statewide, regional and local law enforcement operations. The Ranger leadership commands all of the tactical “close combat” field operators such as the Texas Highway Patrol (THP), as well as various combined Strike, Ranger Reconnaissance, Criminal Intelligence, Counter Terrorism, and DPS Aviation teams.

Today, the BSOC forms the centerpiece of an informed, knowledgeable group of men and women who have learned the art of strategic thinking, operational and tactical innovation, and proactive intelligence development. The greatest challenge for the system today is at the tactical/local level of law enforcement where the potential for cartels to corrupt public officials and law enforcement personnel is greatest. Local municipal and law enforcement levels, including ranchers and their organizations, are empowered by their Texas state partners with actionable intelligence, surveillance and other real-time information that triggers appropriate responses to reduce “vulnerabilities” to criminality and corruption at and near the border.

As an example of the benefits, the Texas Department of Public Safety’s Border Auto Theft Information Center (BATIC) receives thousands of inquiries every week for information on suspicious vehicles. Many of these are from requesting officers, but a great many are from citizens. Ranchers routinely observe and report cartel vehicles as they crash through fences or speed through properties.

## **VIII: Texas Border Communications Operability & Interoperability**

Experience in modern warfare conclusively demonstrates that no campaign can be implemented successfully without a seamless communications network that ties together every participant from tactical to strategic. Texas is a big state with an even bigger appetite for radios and telecommunications equipment. A significant portion of the international border between El Paso and Brownsville is very rural with no terrestrial radio or cell phone communications of any kind. Urban areas along the southwestern border typically operate proprietary radio systems different from rural areas like the lower Rio Grande Valley.

Many current radio systems, towers and antennas in southwestern border counties and elsewhere are 25-30 years old and cannot be maintained. A huge proliferation of locally bought radios has led to a crisis in interoperability that has forced law enforcement agencies and first responders to improvise ways to talk to each other across incompatible police, sheriff's and fire department radios. Newer, secure mobile data terminals for police and emergency vehicles are not commonly used to communicate with central dispatch offices, Texas and federal criminal information databases.

Texas developed a temporary fix to the interoperability problem through the use of mobile teams mounted in trailers and vehicles capable of being dispatched in emergencies to "plug" holes in radio coverage. Texas DPS can activate Communications Emergency Operations Teams as needed to respond to southwestern border region problems. These teams usually work in conjunction with the emergency communications fleet consisting of mobile communications trailers and generators.

Local "tactical" operations are managed from the Mobile Command Center, a 53 foot-long semi-trailer. It provides satellite connection to the DPS computer network, telephone, fax, television, wireless Internet, numerous LCD monitors, aircraft video downlinks and radios on various law enforcement frequencies. In addition, two 40foot and one 30 foot mobile communications trailers are equipped with radios on various law enforcement frequencies as well as a radio gateway for interconnection between the frequency bands. Satellites provide connections to DPS computer networks, telephone, fax and television for access to news and weather channels. Flat panel LCD monitors provide control of the radios and the DPS Computer Aided Dispatch system.

DPS has equipped nine other Field Support Units with television, Internet and radio communications all powered by on-board diesel generators. Six other units are strategically located throughout the state, one in each region, to provide communications support to

any incident or disaster. These mobile platforms are useful in emergencies and during occasional tactical operations, but they fail by a large margin to fix existing interoperability problems. Too often when incidents occur sheriffs, fire departments, volunteer firefighters and other law enforcement agencies are unable to report or communicate with each other or with counterparts on the other side of the U.S. border.

Texas is committed to developing a statewide “system of systems” that will link all law enforcement and emergency responders together. The state will never have the funds to replace local telecommunications with a single set of common equipment. So the scheme currently under development is a cooperative one that allows regional systems to operate independently with added capability when needed to communicate with other regions and agencies through a state-hosted gateway.

This Texas Radio Coalition system (TxRC) represents Texas' 5,300 public safety and emergency response agencies. It was formed in 2006 to begin improving the disjointed approaches to public safety and emergency response communications across Texas. Before the TxRC, there was no statewide user group specifically constituted to examine communications problems across Texas. To date, the TxRC effort has made great progress in forming partnerships between local, state and federal agencies that previously had never shared a common network. In addition, the state DPS has agreed to take responsibility for implementing the state public safety wireless communications strategy, which includes oversight of the distribution of grant funds among all state agencies.

Thanks to TxRC, Texas has a plan to create a common statewide communications system. Unfortunately, the system will be expensive and is entirely dependent on funding from the federal government for implementation. The state of Texas estimates that the southwestern border region of Texas will need at least \$150 million to fill basic operability and interoperability communications gaps to meet modern standards.

## **IX: OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS**

Five years of operational, organizational and experimental effort by the Texas Department of Public Safety has proven the value of several programs and initiatives. Some are similar to those of other states and the federal government. Others are unique to the state of Texas.

## **A: TxMAP**

Texas DPS developed TxMAP as a statewide mapping capability to complement its common JOIC communications system. TxMAP graphically, and in near real-time, displays and shares with UCs and federal agencies a crime map that includes all drug, cash and weapons seizures. It fuses information from other agencies such as ICE arrest and seizure data. The system ties together operational incident reports, THP seizure reports and air sightings and includes a common operating picture shared by all levels from tactical to strategic.

The unique TxMAP software and database allows all agencies in Texas to track the movement of criminal elements and to associate and link seemingly unrelated crimes. The system offers all UCs in Texas the ability to video conference. JOICs routinely use the system to assign law enforcement patrols to specific crime “hot spots” across the state.

The TxMAP image server is smart and versatile. Software in the server matches the received image to a sensor that provides geographical coordinates and places an icon representing the sensor on a map. Then the system then frames the image in red and broadcasts it to pre-selected multiple addresses including CBP checkpoints, sheriffs’ dispatch centers, ranchers, and local law enforcement officers. This notification process is facilitated by smartphones and a quality cell network.

## **B: DPS-BSOC: A Collaborative Learning System**

The Texas DPS has been committed to the development of a border security training and educational strategy focused on developing a “community of interest” among all agencies participating in the war against the cartels.

The training is run out of the BSOC in Austin and provides a decentralized statewide program intended to mitigate the bureaucratic limitations of traditional public sector institutions. The DPS-BSOC training and educational scheme links participants including state military forces, U.S. Coast Guard, THP and such federal agencies as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and DHS, and local law enforcement agencies.

This multiagency information-sharing enterprise also serves as an unofficial and unstructured leadership development and talent management network. BSOC leadership reiterated the importance of developing Texas law enforcement initiatives that incentivize and reward strategic thinking and operational and tactical innovation.

As a key strategy for the war on cartels, the BSOC is committed to creating a collaborative and decentralized versus top-down statewide and border law enforcement operational



environment that leverages the Internet and related technology, thus enabling participants to become part of an adaptive learning organization.

### **C: Autonomous Surveillance Platform (ASP)**

In November 2005, the federal Department of Homeland Security launched the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a multiyear, multibillion-dollar program aimed at securing U.S. borders and reducing illegal immigration. The SBI program was supposed to employ radars, sensors and cameras to detect, identify and classify the threat level associated with an illegal entry into the United States between the ports of entry. In addition, SBI tactical infrastructure (fencing, roads, and lighting) was intended to enhance U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) agents' ability to respond to illegal entry.

Most assessments admit that the SBI experiment failed due to cost and technology shortfalls. The cost per mile to build southwestern border fencing was prohibitive and the SBINet system was never proven to be technologically feasible. Nevertheless, by late 2008 about \$2.4 billion had been allocated to complete approximately 670 miles of vehicle and pedestrian fencing along the roughly 2,000 miles of border between the United States and Mexico. Proposals to build security fences along the U.S.-Mexico border also inflamed sentiment in Mexico and the U.S. Texas DPS concludes that a fence from Brownsville to El Paso would simply be too expensive to build and keep under surveillance. A strategic fence effort would limit fence building to established crossing points, ports of entry and metropolitan areas.

Recently DPS has developed and deployed a low-cost, low-tech surveillance system. This Autonomous Surveillance Platform (ASP) began with a test system of several cameras along the border. The technological heart of ASP is nothing more than small, comparatively inexpensive "wildlife" cameras linked to the Internet. These small palm-sized ASP cameras contain an infrared sensor that captures remarkably good images triggered by body heat or detected motion. The cameras transmit jpeg files via cellphone to an image server that, in turn, passes the images on to both TxMAP and other e-mail addresses accessible by desktop PCs or mobile devices. The current limit of the infrared flash used at night is about 40 feet. With an external or long-range antenna, the cameras can operate in areas with marginal cell phone coverage. Without a trigger, the camera reports on its own "health" with a single image once a day. During the test period, ASP camera observations resulted in over 300 border interdictions of cartel scouts and coyotes.

## **D: Ranger Reconnaissance Teams**

The Texas Rangers have been the lead coordinating force behind the Texas border security effort. This remarkably small group has assumed leadership in Texas for stopping the encroachment of the cartels into the state. The tactical manifestation of this effort is the Ranger Reconnaissance Teams (RRTs).

The Rangers are the mission lead for a cooperative program that brings together a coordinated ground, air and marine assault capability. Each participating federal, state and local agency voluntarily adds its unique capabilities to the tactical battle. The THP acts as an outer perimeter for the Rangers by funneling traffic toward Ranger border positions. The tactical contact teams deploy along the Rio Grande in small, concealed positions and are able to quickly respond to intelligence from APS platforms, DPS and National Guard surveillance helicopters, as well as calls to UCs from local police or citizens. DPS Dive Teams conduct SONAR scans of the Rio Grande and assist in recovery of vehicles and contraband in splashdown areas. “Spiking” teams from the Border Patrol add their manpower and sophisticated surveillance equipment to assist in containing and apprehending traffickers. Texas military forces install ASP cameras on trafficking routes, provide aerial support for surveillance and support communications to all team participants

The Rangers have engaged all of the internal Texas law enforcement organizations. DPS SWAT teams provide snipers for clandestine overwatch. The DPS Aviation Section allied with aircraft from the Texas National Guard, provides a standby means for air insertion that is able to respond very quickly to requests from U.S. Border Patrol. These aircraft identify and call out threats, and provide early warnings of approaching threats from Mexico. Aerial surveillance cameras provide a vital service by recording team engagements for later exploitation by BSOC intelligence. The Border Patrol provides tow trucks and wreckers to assist the teams in extracting submerged vehicles that smugglers use to transport drugs to Rio Grande crossing points.

Clearly the mission is greater than the available resources. For that reason, the Ranger leadership has been forced to prioritize deployment of its reconnaissance teams to the most serious tactical threats. The teams have focused their attention on a series of successful tactical operations in the lower Rio Grande Valley beginning in June 2010. These missions began with ground and air reconnaissance patrols identifying filtration routes through the valley. Hidden in small groups and working mainly at night, RRTs identified and apprehended cartel “scouts” or spotters and recovered illicit narcotics, currency, contraband and vehicles from splashdowns in the Rio Grande.

The resource issue remains the greatest impediment to the continued success of the Rangers’ border war against the cartels. Budget cuts for DHS, FEMA, U.S. CBP, ICE,

Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Coast Guard have severely constrained the ability of Texas to rely on federal partners and their resources to expand border operations. Border protection agencies have suffered restrictions on overtime pay and severe limitations on fuel.

## **X: THE CONDUCT OF MILITARY-STYLE OPERATIONS: OPERATION BORDER STAR**

Operation BORDER STAR is essentially the state's "concept plan" for joint defense of southwestern border counties and constitutes the state's operational border security framework. The importance of this effort has grown exponentially with the escalation of cartel-related border crime. The operational plan integrates the cooperative participation by ICE, DHS' Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement (OCE), CBP, DEA, ATF and the FBI as well as all Texas, local and tribal partners.

### **A: Purpose**

Beginning in January 2008, and extended in 2009, Operation BORDER STAR has served as the focus of enhanced patrolling, surveillance and actions to deter, disrupt and disorganize cartel criminal enterprises operating throughout Texas and in the six operational border sectors. In crafting and executing Operation BORDER STAR, the state has been careful to ensure complete compliance with and support for both the Texas Homeland Strategic Security Plan (2010-2015) and the U.S. DHS's agenda for addressing potential threats from across the border.

The operational intent is for all local law enforcement and first responders to remain responsible for the initial detection of cross-border activity or violence. This policy ensures that neither state nor federal authorities will usurp local authorities in dealing with lawlessness within the southwestern border counties. In addition, the strategy for UC responses to cross-border violence was to be driven by intelligence obtained from multi-agency sources brought together by JOICs.

### **B: An Instructive Anecdote**

A good example of the value of tactical unified border operations occurred during Operation Comanche Moon. The Texas Rangers were conducting a ranger reconnaissance operation south of the Mexican border along Falcon Lake. The Rangers had some early activity with the Zetas cartel and had made some pickups of traffickers and drugs. RRTs and

Texas Game Wardens had made several arrests and the operation was gaining momentum when to the total surprise of those on the U S side, an operation conducted by the Mexican Navy, Marines and Army started up just across the border from the Rangers' operation. This "accidental" joint and international operation had a remarkable impact on drug trafficking on both sides of the border. In short, the accidental combined operation resulted in an immediate stop to all trafficking in that region for the duration of Comanche Moon.

The success of this accidental "joint" operation is instructive and begs the question: how much more effective would border security operations be if data and intelligence could be better shared between U.S. and Mexican border forces? Even more decisive, of course, would be a "coalition"-style military operation that would bring together the combined U.S.-Mexican military and law enforcement forces in a well-designed, coordinated and synchronized joint security effort. Senior military leaders who witnessed Operation Comanche Moon surmised that a sustained coalition campaign would probably secure the border from drug trafficking and other illegal activities in nine to 12 months.

### **C: Operation Blue Heron: Ranger Reconnaissance Teams in Action**

Operation Blue Heron, conducted in October 2010 was an effort by the Rangers that demonstrates how complex and inclusive these RRT operations have become. The Rangers planned Blue Heron as a response to narco-terrorists' efforts to establish a sophisticated supply chain operation linked through Texas border counties. The Rangers focused on Hidalgo County, an area of growing narcotics trafficking and local corruption. Many natural shallow arroyos, creeks and wooded cuts along this sector of the Texas-Mexican border make it ideal for smuggling.

The concept for the operation centered on the insertion of about 20 small, five to six man "joint" observation teams into the border area, principally along the banks of the Rio Grande with the stated mission of conducting a zone reconnaissance in sector to identify and conduct surveillance of illegal infiltration routes. These teams were truly "joint" in that each was built around small teams headed by a Ranger and joined by Border Patrol, Fish and Wildlife and, on some occasions, the Texas National Guard, with the provision that Guard members could not become involved in arrest and apprehension.

The leadership added defense in-depth by enlisting the THP to "work the flanks" along all roads radiating northward from traditional border crossing sites. THP teams stationed themselves strategically in order to prevent the smugglers from reaching major Texas highways and engaging in dangerous high-speed chases. Border Patrol Riverine units

patrolled the river both to spot crossers and if possible “herd” them toward RRTs waiting along the riverbanks. Standing by on alert were rapid reaction teams mounted aboard DPS Aviation positioned strategically north of the border to react to calls for assistance from the RRTs.

The Rangers knew that enemy “scouts” lined both sides of the border waiting to identify and pass on RRT locations to the crossers. Success depended on secrecy and stealth in order to avoid detection. RRTs and their support moved clandestinely into position at night trying to avoid known enemy scout positions. Supporting units, helicopters, patrol cruisers and boats were kept ready in locations away from scout observation posts.

The first action of the smugglers was to flee when detected by RRTs. Smugglers and scouts reported on the presence of RRTs using radios and cellphones. To protect smugglers, scouts often acted as ad hoc counter-assault teams to distract or occasionally shoot at officers. To counter this threat, RRTs and helicopter crews were heavily armed with automatic weapons against an enemy increasingly prone to react with violence when detected.

The operation went down much as planned. Immediately after dark, smugglers began to cross by small rubber boats floating deep in the water under the burden of a ton or more of plastic wrapped marijuana bundles. When possible, Rangers and their colleagues “jumped” the smugglers and took them into custody on the spot. Many more smugglers fled when confronted, abandoning their loads and rushing northward into the protection of waiting scouts. RRTs passed on the smugglers’ routes to Border Patrol and THP personnel with the hope that smugglers would be apprehended before disappearing into hide houses and safe areas occupied by the scouts. Those smugglers who succeeded in eluding RRTs were often spotted by FLIR-equipped helicopters orbiting above. When detected by air, the smugglers attempted to set fire to their drug-laden vehicles using gasoline bombs.

Four days of intensive operations yielded over two tons of narcotics along with the apprehension of over 100 illegal aliens, including 10 Indians who began their journey to the border from New Delhi through Bangkok, Vietnam, Moscow, Cuba, Guatemala, Costa Rica onward to Mexico and ultimately Texas. The RRTs learned a great deal about the increasingly adaptive and creative cartel operations. The cartel’s usual smuggling method involved a lightning quick meeting between rubber boats carrying the narcotics across the river and a stolen SUV or pickup on the U. S. side. The Rangers discovered that the enemy increased his probability of escaping the THP by scattering “caltrops,” essentially small, sharp-edged devices intended to flatten the tires of pursuers. The enemy employed an increasingly sophisticated scout effort that included the use of “dry runs” and deception

operations to confuse RRTs. The scouts even constructed sophisticated “lay up” positions equipped with comfortable chairs, tree climbing ropes to gain better visibility and very expensive and effective handheld radios for maintaining contact with smugglers.

Blue Heron was just one of many such operations conducted in 2010-2011. After each mission, all players participated in after action reviews (AARs) to learn and pass on lessons to the next set of operators. The main lesson learned by the Texas DPS from these operations is that they face an elusive, creative, ruthless, well-armed and superbly financed enemy who is trying to learn and adapt at a faster pace than their American enemy.

## **XI: TEXAS AS A LABORATORY FOR A NATIONAL EFFORT**

Five years of state operations have yielded valuable lessons and insights that can improve the border security operations of states and U.S. federal agencies. Below are insights shared by senior leaders within the Texas DPS who consider their operations in the war against narco-terrorism to be a model for how this war might be prosecuted in a wider, multi-state and national campaign.

They accede to the fact that much of their effort was derived from experience in recent campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Adaptation of a military-style effort is driven by an appreciation of the ability of the military to achieve a common approach to confronting the enemy in spite of differences between coalition partners and host governments. Without question, the military brings to the table decades of successful operations against adaptive enemies who seek to win against a shaky coalition that often is crippled by differences in operational method and procedural techniques.

### **A: Strategic**

The Texas campaign against the cartels has proven the value of a control scheme that involves local, state and federal partnerships without sacrificing the sovereignty of any agency. The success of RRTs and Operation BORDER STAR demonstrates that a joint effort between organizations is greater than the sum of its parts. By their own admission, federal agencies willingly participate in these efforts because they recognize their value. As with any military-style effort, strategic success is dependent on shared intent. Beginning in 2006, Governor Perry and his Texas homeland security team took the time to develop a coherent border security strategy. Working closely with border sheriffs, the team stressed the importance of cooperative engagement. No strategic program can succeed unless all participants -- tactical, operational and strategic -- are knit together by a common doctrine and shared communications.

The state patiently “shopped” the strategy by engaging all participants through the Border Security Council that worked in a sense as both a sounding board to highlight issues to the federal government and a vehicle for creating a sense of commitment from every state and federal agency. The Unified Command structure created by the state in 2006 is the glue that holds this alliance together. By building the structure from the bottom up rather than the top down, Texas created a willing alliance between the most threatened regions in the state.

The state then connected each of the six UC regions together using the Joint Operations and Intelligence Center (JOIC) network. UC/JOICs in effect replicate the military system of joint command and control that has proven so successful in Iraq and Afghanistan. The difference (and the genius of the system) is that Texas successfully substituted “cooperation” for “command” without substantially forfeiting any of the effectiveness lost by sacrificing unity of command. Certainly, the system is imperfect. The structure would surely fail should trust be lost or the sense of comity forsaken by one level seeking undue credit over another. So far this has not happened due in large part to the commitment by all to prevent the intrusion of the cartels into American territory.

## **B: Operational**

The Border Security Operations Center complex in Austin is the operational headquarters that effectively ties local law enforcement to state and federal resources, and ensures a unity of effort. The BSOC achieves this goal by bringing together all operational level-state entities such as the Rangers, Texas military forces and THP under a single joint and interagency system of management and control.

One lesson from past failures was the imperative need to close the gap between tactical defense along the border and operational depth throughout the state. The idea that a single point defense could interdict persons crossing the border violates a tenet of war: narrow, single point defenses are both porous and brittle, and can easily be defeated by an intruder that manages to “break through” by piercing a single defensive line and moving very quickly into the undefended areas deeper in the state and beyond.

Texas DPS uses a layered “defense in depth” at the tactical and operational levels. This approach seeks to extend interdiction beginning with a low-cost interconnected set of sensors that extends from the banks of the Rio Grande inward through the entire depth of the southwestern border counties. Such a system is made possible using off-the-shelf

sensors, some as unsophisticated as store-bought deer detectors, linked to a regional command and control facility with GPS and cell phones.

The key to the success of this effort is proliferation and tactical depth at the sacrifice of sophistication. Some of these sensor-detectors cost as little as a few hundred dollars. State border authorities are careful to hide these devices to prevent detection, but their low cost and density along the river makes their loss to the narco-terrorists affordable.

### **C: Tactical**

The first principle of Texas border security operations is to empower local law enforcement. Soldiers often say that a bad strategy can never be salvaged by bad tactics, but good tactics can often salvage bad strategy. This saying simply reinforces the truism that no national strategy that seeks to defeat narco-terrorism can be adequately confronted unless the tactic units such as local police and federal border security stations are properly staffed, resourced, competent, and well-led.

The Texas DPS focuses most of its effort on the border counties. The BSOC in Austin understands that border sheriffs are overwhelmed by the threat of narco-terrorism. To use a military analogy, sheriffs are the close combat forces of the narco-war and it becomes a matter of first-priority that sheriffs have all they need to achieve success. The JOIC is structured to put information gathering from local law enforcement first in priority. The Rangers work closely with local enforcement officers to ensure they are never overpowered by the firepower and technical sophistication of the cartels.

RRT operations have developed firsthand a creative and imaginative set of tactical, close combat skills. The timely military adage that “the enemy has a vote” continues to drive innovation and change in the Ranger’s tactical method. Narco-terrorists have the patience, commitment and money to threaten the security of the state in many complex and changing ways. Tactical teams have learned to counter by deploying in smaller units, operating principally at night and linking with assets such as the THP that offer defense-in-depth. Most troubling is realization that the cartels are becoming more violent. Lately the Rangers have been involved in shootouts with well-armed narco-terrorists willing to kill to protect their illicit cargoes.

Texas has sought to implement the most cost-effective and reliable strategy for achieving technological dominance at critical border crossing points. While narco-terrorists are a national strategic threat, they are motivated by money not religion or ideology. Thus at the tactical level they will seek the most effective means for crossing using the cheapest human



capital. They will avoid crossing where agents, cameras or anti-intrusion technologies are present. Key to cartel success is not to “lose a load.”

The aborted federal border fence initiative led Texas DPS officials to employ a simple and inexpensive network of cameras, cell phones and locating devices using off the shelf technologies. They compensate for a lack of complexity by deploying in layers and adding an active human surveillance and immediate interdiction plan that puts teams and helicopters over the target immediately after detection. The greatest drawback to the tactical surveillance system is its lack of persistent surveillance. The border is too long and the cartel’s activities are too intrusive to allow anything more than sporadic observation without a larger coordinated effort.

Years of collective effort by Texas law enforcement have yielded a remarkably flexible and efficient system of border protection that involves all levels of command from federal to local. This system is under threat not only by an increasingly ruthless and adaptive enemy, but also by an increasingly diminished budget.

Without question, the future success of this effort will depend on the ability of the state of Texas, local and federal agencies to work together to expand their war against intrusion by cartels. The bottom line, however, is that while today Texas is the front line in this escalating war, the potential consequences of success or failure will affect our entire nation. Thus, it is up to the nation to support Texas in its efforts to defeat this transnational criminal enterprise.

## **Texas Border Security Study: A Strategic Military Assessment**

The following bibliography underscores the complexities, challenges and critical importance of cooperation and coordination at the strategic, operational and tactical levels between Federal-Texas law enforcement agencies and enhancement of respective intelligence and information sharing capabilities and processes associated with southwest border security initiatives.

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